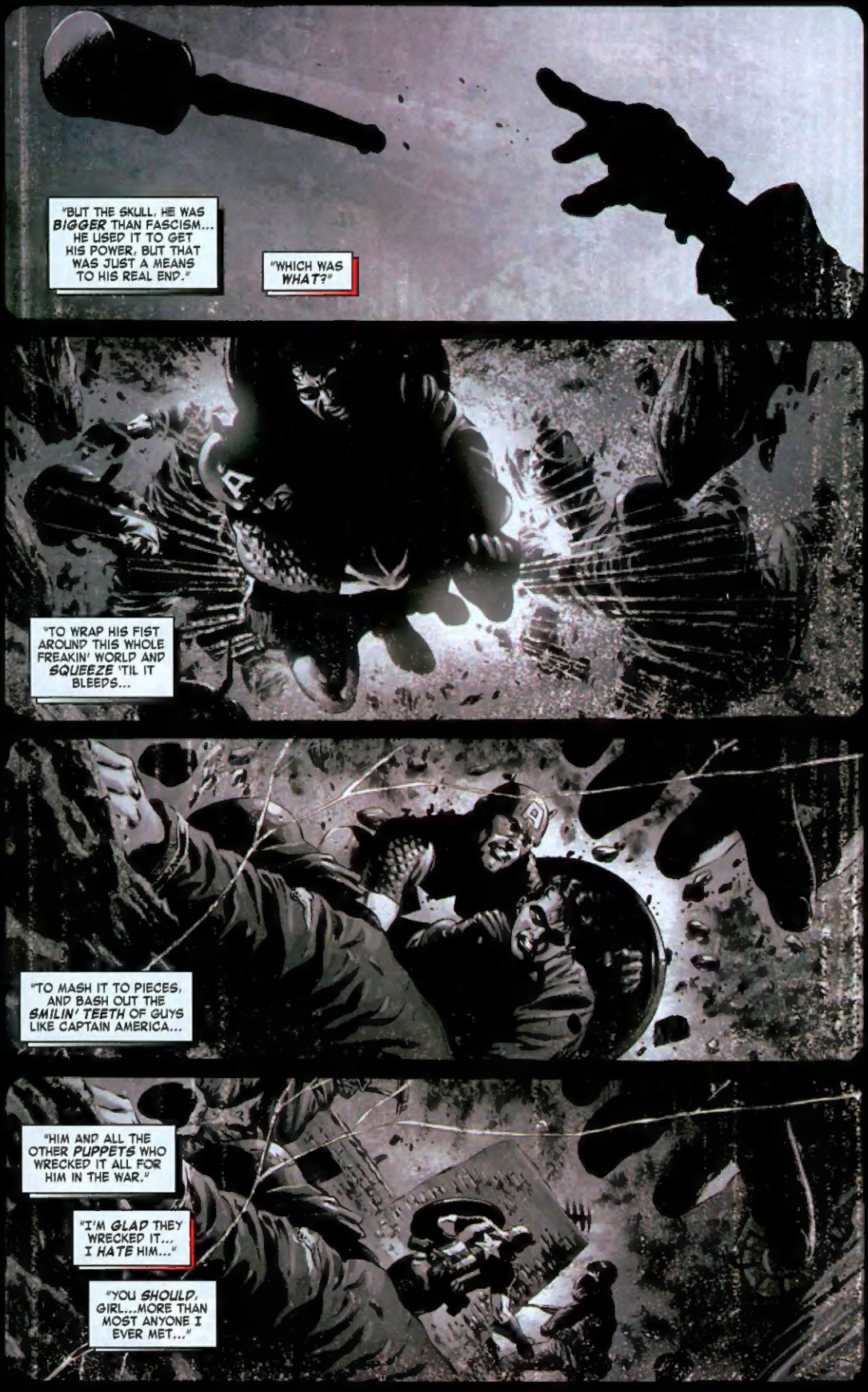
"SEE? JUST LOOK AT HIM...NO HESITATION AT ALL.
"PRACTICALLY SMILIN', EVEN."
"WHY SHOULDN'T HE SMILE? HE'S TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD FROM NAZIS."
"YOU THINK THAT'S WHY HE'S SMILIN'? NAW... HE'S SMILING BECAUSE HE'S A TOTAL JERK...

"A JERK ABOUT TO RUIN THE PLANS OF A GREAT MAN."
"GREAT MAN... YEAH, RIGHT.
"I GUESS CALIGULA WAS A GREAT MAN, TOO?"
"SOME WOULD SAY THAT, YEAH...BUT THE RED SKULL, HE WAS IN A WHOLE 'NOTHER LEAGUE THAN THAT CRAZY %@#*&...
"THE RED SKULL...HE MADE FEAR...KILLIN'... ALL-OUT TERROR... HE MADE IT AN ART.

"SEE? THIS IS WHAT YOU DON'T GET...BECAUSE THOSE SONS OF %@#$& MESSED YER HEAD ALL AROUND.
"ALL THAT AMERICAN WAY CRAP? TRUTH AND JUSTICE AND ALL? THAT'S A LOAD, JUST LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN THIS CRUMMY WORLD.
"JUST ANOTHER WAY TO CONTROL THE MASSES. GET 'EM ALL JUICED UP THINKIN' THEY COULD BE RICH AND FAMOUS, JUST LIKE THE PEOPLE THEY SEE ON TV.
"MEANWHILE, ALL THE REAL POWER...IT'S WAY OUTTA THEIR HANDS."
"OH, AND FASCISM'S BETTER, THEN?"
"NOT BETTER, MAYBE, BUT MORE HONEST, AT LEAST.
"IT DON'T PRETEND TO VALUE HUMAN LIFE WHILE MAKING THAT LIFE A WHOLE HELLUVA LOT WORSE OFF.


"BUT THE SKULL, HE WAS BIGGER THAN FASCISM... HE USED IT TO GET HIS POWER, BUT THAT WAS JUST A MEANS TO HIS REAL END."
"WHICH WAS WHAT?"
"TO WRAP HIS FIST AROUND THIS WHOLE FREAKIN' WORLD AND SQUEEZE 'TIL IT BLEEDS...
"TO MASH IT TO PIECES, AND BASH OUT THE SMILIN' TEETH OF GUYS LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA...
"HIM AND ALL THE OTHER PUPPETS WHO WRECKED IT ALL FOR HIM IN THE WAR."
"I'M GLAD THEY WRECKED IT... I HATE HIM..."
"YOU SHOULD, GIRL...MORE THAN MOST ANYONE I EVER MET..."

RED IS THE DARKEST COLOR

ED BRUBAKER	MIKE PERKINS	FRANK D'ARMATA	VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA	SCHMIDT, LAZER & SITTERSON	TOM BREVOORT	JOE QUESADA	DAN BUCKLEY
WRITER	ART	COLOR ART	LETTERER	ASSISTANT EDITORS	EDITOR	EDITOR IN CHIEF	PUBLISHER

CAPTAIN AMERICA CREATED BY JOE SIMON AND JACK KIRBY

YEAH, HE WAS. AN' EVEN THOUGH HE TREATED YOU LIKE A REDHEADED STEP-CHILD, YOU USED TO SEE THE WORLD HIS WAY...
...AN' I AIN'T GIVIN' UP 'TIL YOU SEE IT THAT WAY AGAIN.
AHHH!

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STOP IT! LEAVE ME ALONE!
I BEEN TELLIN' YOU FOR TWO WEEKS, YOU WEAK LITTLE NOTHING...
...YOU WANT THIS TO END--
KRAK
UNH!
--YOU GOTTA STOP ME!
SHOW ME A LITTLE BIT OF THE OLD SIN...
PLEASE...I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT...JUST...DON'T HIT ME AGAIN...
WRONG ANSWER!
AAAAH!
WMP
GOD, YOU'D BE SICK IF YOU COULD SEE YOURSELF. THE REAL YOU, I MEAN... BEGGIN' ME TO STOP...
THE SYNTHIA SCHMIDT I KNEW... SHE DIDN'T EVEN FEEL PAIN...
WHY--WHY NOT...?
'CAUSE IT WAS PRACTICALLY ALL SHE EVER KNEW.

The Isle of Exiles--
Many Years Ago
WAAUUGGGHHHHHAAAAA!
NEIN...MY HEIR WILL NOT BE A GIRL...
HERR SKULL, PLEASE! I BEG YOU--
--DO NOT KILL HER...SHE IS STILL FROM YOUR BLOOD, HERR SKULL.
HOW DARE YOU SPEAK TO ME, WENCH?
FORGIVE ME, I KNOW IT'S NOT MY PLACE. AND I KNOW YOU WANTED A SON...BUT YOU ARE THE RED SKULL...
...ANY OFFSPRING OF YOUR BLOODLINE MUST SURELY BE DESTINED FOR GREATNESS.

AND IF YOU WOULD ALLOW ME, I WILL RAISE THIS CHILD MYSELF...AND MAKE SURE THAT SHE IS WORTHY OF HER GREAT FATHER...
YOU ARE THAT SCARBO WOMAN, YES? ONE OF GRUNING'S PEOPLE?
YES, HERR SKULL. SUSAN SCARBO...MY BROTHER AND I HAVE SERVED THE MASTERS OF THIS ISLAND SINCE BEFORE THEY DISCOVERED YOU...
...AND NOW AS ALWAYS, I AM IN YOUR SERVICE.
HMMF...
WELL, THE BRAT MUST NOT HAVE AN EASY LIFE. JUST AS I SUFFERED THROUGH CHILDHOOD, SO MUST SHE.
WAAAUUGGHH!!
OF COURSE, MY LIEGE...SHE'LL KNOW MISERY AND ANGER AND HATE UNTIL SHE DOESN'T EVEN RECOGNIZE THEM...
SHE WILL BE A TERROR.
THEN I WILL SPARE HER, FOR NOW... AND IF YOU PLEASE ME WITH YOUR WORK, YOU MAY HAVE A FUTURE OF YOUR OWN AT MY SIDE SOMEDAY.
NOTHING WOULD PLEASE ME MORE.
BUT FOR NOW, YOU WILL BE THE NIGHT MOTHER TO THIS CUR...
...AND WHEN I SEE HER NEXT, I HAD BETTER SEE BLOOD IN HER EYES.

TOGETHER WE W
TINK
SEE? LIKE THAT.
WHAT DO YOU EXPECT? I'VE NEVER THROWN A KNIFE BEFORE...NEVER EVEN PLAYED DARTS.
NO. TRY AGAIN.
WE'RE NOT LEAVIN' THIS ROOM UNTIL YOU HIT IT.
WHAT IF I JUST STAB YOU INSTEAD?
BABY, I'D LOVE TO SEE YOU TRY...BUT WE BOTH KNOW THAT AIN'T HAPPENIN'.
MAYBE YOU CAN'T DO THIS BECAUSE YOU'RE YOUNGER NOW.
YOU WERE BETTER WITH KNIVES WHEN YOU WERE GROWN-UP... BUT YOU WERE MORE VICIOUS AS A KID.
SO NOW THIS PERSON I'M SUPPOSED TO BE AGES BACKWARDS?
IS SHE FROM ANOTHER DIMENSION, TOO?
DON'T BE A MORON. NOBODY AGES BACKWARDS. YOU GOT YOUR AGE SPED UP...

"YOU WERE LIKE NINE YEARS OLD OR SOMETHIN'...AN' THE SKULL WAS *ALMOST* PROUD OF WHAT YOU WERE GROWIN' INTO.
"YOU WERE A BRUTAL LITTLE BEAST OF A GIRL... A ROYAL TERROR.
"IT WAS STARTIN' TO LOOK LIKE MAYBE YOU'D BE A DECENT HEIR AFTER ALL, UNTIL HE FOUND OUT HE WAS DYIN'...
"SO HE GOT HIS SCIENTISTS TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO MAKE YOU GROW UP FASTER.
"YOU SAT IN SOME MACHINE FOR A FEW WEEKS AND WENT FROM A KID BARELY IN HER TEENS TO A FULL GROWN WOMAN..."
A PRETTY HOT ONE, TOO.
GROSS.
"ANYWAY, WHILE YOU WERE BEING SPEED-GROWN, THIS MACHINE WAS TEACHIN' YOU EVERYTHING THE SKULL WANTED YOU TO KNOW.
"SENDIN' STUFF RIGHT INTO YOUR HEAD... SHOWIN' YOU HIS VISION OF THE WORLD...

"AND WHEN THEY FINALLY WOKE YOU UP, YOU [redacted] BAD TO THE BONE. AND LOYAL TO THE SKULL.
"BUT [redacted] WAS PRACTICALLY AT DEATH'S DOOR, AND YOU WERE GONNA SEE HE GOT HIS DUE BEFORE HE DIED... AND THEN YOU WERE GONNA TAKE HIS PLACE."
SO, WHAT HAPPENED? WHY AM I NOT, LIKE, THIRTY, [redacted] WHATEVER?
AH...IT ALL WENT WRONG. YOU WEREN'T GOOD ENOUGH.
FAILED HIM. JUST LIKE ALL HIS OTHER SERVANTS.
S.H.I.E.L.D. GOT THEIR HANDS ON YOU, BUT THEY DIDN'T KNOW HOW OLD YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO BE, SO THEY DE-AGED YOU BACK INTO A TEENAGER...
THEN MOTHER NIGHT BUSTED YOU OUT, AND YOU AN' [redacted] RAISED HELL FOR A COUPLE YEARS...
...UNTIL THE SKULL CAME BACK.
CAME BACK? FROM THE DEAD?
YEP. GOT HIS MAN ZOLA TO BRING HIM BACK IN SOME KINDA CLONE... I NEVER GOT ALL THE DETAILS.
IS HE... CAN HE DO THAT AGAIN?

NAH, ZOLA'S LAB GOT HIT BY A.I.M. OR HYDRA OR SOMEONE LAST YEAR...DESTROYED ANYTHING WORTH A DAMN.
AN' ZOLA AIN'T BEEN SEEN SINCE.
YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY HE CAN'T COME BACK THIS TIME, ANYWAY.
'CAUSE HE'D TAKE ONE LOOK AT YOU AND TRY TO CHUCK YOU OFF A CLIFF ALL OVER AGAIN.
HE'D SPIT IN YOUR FACE FIRST, TOO. BECAUSE YOU'RE SO DAMN WEAK.
BECAUSE YOU AIN'T FIT TO BE [redacted] DAUGHTER!
STOP IT! SHUT UP!
SHUT UP!
THWAK
WELL... NOT SO BAD AT THIS AFTER ALL. SEE?

AAAAHHHH!
SMAK
YOU STARTIN' TO REMEMBER IT ALL NOW, GIRL?
OOOFF!
IS THAT WHAT'S GOIN' ON? AM I GETTIN' THROUGH?
...LET ME GO...JUST PLEASE...LET ME GO...
DAMN IT.
YOU WANNA BE SET FREE? FINE...WE'LL MAKE A DEAL.
CHAINFEEL!

YOU PUT THIS POOR SUCKER OUTTA HIS MISERY, AN' I'LL LET YOU GO...
WH-WHAT?
MMMM!
WHO IS THAT? WHAT--?
THIS IDIOT? NIGHT WATCHMAN AT A PLACE I NEEDED TO GET INTO LAST NIGHT.
THOUGHT HE MIGHT COME IN HANDY FOR YOUR EDUCATION.
MMMMPPHHHMMMM!
THIS IS CRAZY...YOU'RE CRAZY. I CAN'T KILL SOMEONE.
NOT EVEN TO BUY YOUR FREEDOM?
NO...I--NO.

ALL RIGHT.
NOOO!
BLAM
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO DO THAT!
I GAVE YOU A CHANCE TO DO IT YOURSELF... WHAT'RE YOU CRYIN' ABOUT?
HE WAS ALWAYS A DEAD MAN.
I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU SO GOD--
KRAK
GOOD. [illegible] WE'RE GETTIN' SOMEWHERE.

AAAAAAHHH!
WWAALHHGG--
Y'KNOW, [redacted] DAD--THE SKULL-- HE'S THE ONLY [redacted] I EVER RESPECTED IN THIS WHOLE DAMN WORLD.
I USED TO THINK THAT SOMEDAY, YOU AN' ME, WE MIGHT GIVE HIM A REAL HEIR.
WAIT-- WAIT--
BUT YOU REALLY ARE AS MUCH A FAILURE AS THE SKULL THOUGHT.
COUGH-- COUGH!
SEE, 'CAUSE I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE SOMEWHERE. SYNTHIA...

I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE, BUT YOU LET THOSE SCUM-SUCKERS BREAK YOU...
LET THEM TURN YOU INTO SOMEONE ELSE. SOMEONE USELESS.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT MAYBE YOU COULD BE MORE...BUT I GUESS YOUR DADDY KNEW BEST...
COUGH COUGH
...HE SHOULD'VE DROWNED YOU AT BIRTH.
WAUGHHHHAAA!

SHE'S COMING ALONG FINE, I'M SURE...BUT SHE WILL ALWAYS BE TOO WEAK FOR MY PURPOSES...
ALL WOMEN ARE TOO WEAK.
WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO, SKULL!?
TURNED YOUR OWN CHILD INTO A MONSTER!
I DO WITH HER WHAT I WILL! SHE IS WORTH NOTHING TO ME...DO YOU UNDERSTAND? SHE HAS FAILED ME FROM BIRTH...
...BECAUSE SHE WAS NOT A SON!
...UT!

SSSZZZZWHHZZZKKKSSSS
ZZZZHHHSSSSZZZ
YOU SHOULDN'T LEAVE KNIVES AROUND IF YOU'RE PLANNING TO TORTURE A GIRL, BROCK.
DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE THE GUTS TO USE ANY OF 'EM.
YOUR FACE IS DIFFERENT.
YOUR FATHER'S SURGEONS FIXED IT UP A WHILE BACK.
YOU PLANNIN' TO KILL ME?
YOU'VE MORE THAN EARNED IT, WITH YOUR PATHETIC ATTEMPTS AT DEPROGRAMMING.
YOU'RE HERE, AIN'TCHA?
YEAH, I AM...
BACK TO PAINT THIS WORLD RED...
The Beginning...

MARVEL HEROES HOTSPOT

TOM SEZ

Is this a great time to be reading comics or what?

I can't recall another period where there was so much good stuff readily available to be consumed. Both Marvel and otherwise, both new and collected, if you've got a comic book jones to sate, chances are there's something out there that'll satisfy your appetite.

I also feel a general sense of excitement coming back into the field, as readers, retailers and fans of all stripes react to the overall movement. Sure, there's still plenty of snarkiness, plenty jaded cynicism of a kind only possible when the veil separating reader and creator has been permanently sundered. But there's also a wellspring of optimism, of wonder, of good feeling going around. Surely I can't be the only person who's seen this?

And it's not simply because those of us currently working in the comic book vineyards are so wonderful--that's not my point at all. Among classic material, from the greats of the medium, there's more readily available than ever before. It took me fifteen years to complete a run of FANTASTIC FOUR--now you can go out and buy a DVD-Rom of the whole thing for under fifty dollars, shot from the original books. On the low-tech side, the first 93 issues have been collected in hardcover MARVEL MASTERWORKS volumes, the first 83 in softcover black and white ESSENTIALS editions. And the same is true, in some measure, of everything from the competition's *Justice League of America* (80 issues in hardcover) to Will Eisner's *Spirit* (seventeen hardcover volumes and counting).

Atop that, the traditional stigma against reading comics seems to be diminishing, especially as movies and television adapt more and more material from our pages, and as more and more of the folks at the top of the entertainment world food chain have comic book reading in their background. Sure, we still get the *40-Year-Old Virgin* treatment from time to time, but these days we're just as likely to get the opposite. If nothing else, manufacturers know that we comic-book fans will spend money on the things we love, and they respect that, if nothing else.

So hold your head up high, True Believer! We finally won! The world is ours!

It's still a hair too early for us to have received any feedback on this page--the first one will be seeing print in about a week's time. But we're already starving for feedback, so please, drop us a line at mheroes@marvel.com and let us know how we're doing.

Tom B

ITEM! IRON MAN associate editor Nicole Wiley has changed her name! Apparently, the Wiley appellation wasn't good enough for our Nicole, so she'll hereafter be known as Nicole Boose--and she went so far as to get married to Jorge Boose just to make it official (but take it from us--it was the name she was really after!). So congrats to the happy couple--and, say, what goes better together than Tony Stark and Boose?

ITEM! You asked for her, you got her! Spinning out of the pages of HOUSE OF M next month is an all-new series devoted to the adventures of Carol Danvers, Ms. Marvel! (A moment's pause here for Tom, who's still mourning the code-name Warbird.) Written by Brian Reed, the mastermind behind the ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN video game, and drawn by newcomer Rob De La Torre, Carol's got a new attitude and a new life-goal to pursue. (And don't be too surprised to see her hanging around the pages of NEW AVENGERS as well, as Brian Bendis is notoriously the jealous type!) There's a special lead-in story running in GIANT-SIZE MS. MARVEL #1 this month, along with a bevy of classic reprints to get you up to speed on where Carol's been. And then, in March, keep your eyes peeled and your wallet handy for MS. MARVEL #1!

ITEM! Love is in the air this February--and who'd have thought that coldhearted Fabian Nicieza would be the guy behind it all? But it's true--Fabe's the one who pitched us an I ❤ MARVEL, a month's worth of wonderful one-shots by a variety of creators, all focusing in some way on the eternal splendor of romance as it applies to men and women in cowls and tights! You'll notice the first four in the checklist at the end of this page--and we had so much love to share that the fifth one-shot, MASKED INTENTIONS, featuring Speedball, Squirrel Girl, Justice and Firestar, got squeezed into March!

ITEM! She's our strongest link to the Marvel-that-was, so here's a special shout-out to fabulous Flo Steinberg! Once Stan Lee's gal Friday and corresponding secretary back in the glory days of the 1960s, Flo's been back on staff for about a decade now, functioning as one of our eagle-eyed proofreaders! Whether it's teaching us how to spell Brobdingnagian, or translating Bendis' grammar into something resembling English, Flo's once again become an invaluable member of our Marvel family--and she knows where Stan buried all the bodies, so she's got the kind of job security few can match!

ITEM! You've no doubt heard about it on the Internet already, but in case you're one of those fun-loving luddites, the big news in the Marvel Universe in 2006 is going to be CIVIL WAR, a seven-part event from the mind of Mark Millar and the hand of Steve McNiven. Also lending some eye, ear, nose & throat expertise were the Marvel braintrust, consisting of Jeph Loeb, J. Michael Straczynski and Brian Bendis. You'll begin to see the breadcrumbs sprinkled liberally throughout all of our books in the coming weeks (and it wouldn't be the worst idea to keep an eye on AMAZING SPIDER-MAN this month...), so stay tuned for further updates!

MEET YOUR EDITORIAL CREW! Tom Brevoort received new Doctor Who David Tennant for Xmas. Andy Schmidt's wife, Alix, got him three *Justice League* DVDs, despite being sick of watching cartoons rather than shows about babies or dogs with jobs. Molly Lazer got a Target gift card for Chanukah, which she promptly went out and spent on DVDs like *Muppet Treasure Island* and *Singing in the Rain*. Aubrey Sitterson spent Kwanzaa all alone, in a funk, grumbling to himself.

ON SALE FEBRUARY 2006

BOOKS OF DOOM #4: Learn why Victor created the iron armor of Dr. Doom to seal himself off from the rest of humanity!

CAPTAIN AMERICA #15: Crossbones & Sin: young love on the run!

FANTASTIC FOUR #535: Can the Thing stop the Hulk before he destroys Las Vegas?

FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN #5: Who is the woman Spider-Man has been stalking her entire life?

GIANT-SIZE MS. MARVEL #1: Carol Danvers' time to shine has come!

I ❤ MARVEL: WEB OF ROMANCE: What's a Spider-Man to give his Spider-Wife for Valentine's Day?

I ❤ MARVEL: MY MUTANT HEART: Three offbeat mutant romances, starring Wolverine, Cannonball, and...Doop?

I ❤ MARVEL: MARVEL ALL: Featuring Daredevil, the Avengers and the Inhumans, as drawn by some of Japan's finest artists!

I ❤ MARVEL: OUTLAW LOVE: Can love survive when both parties involved are dangerous criminals...and one of them is targeted for death?

IRON MAN: THE INEVITABLE #3: It's Iron Man vs. the Ghost, round two!

MARVEL TEAM-UP #17: Can Mutant 2099 help save the League of Losers and the rest of the world from Chronok?

NEW AVENGERS #15: The aftermath of HOUSE OF M results in the birth of a powerful new villain!

NEW THUNDERBOLTS #10: Moonstone is back! Or is she...?

SENTINEL #4: Juston returns home to confront his father, with the deadly Stealth Sentinel hot on his trail!

SENTRY #5: The Sentry must discover his forgotten origin to learn who and what he truly is!

SHE-HULK #5: Say hello to the newest member of She-Hulk's firm: Matt Hawk, the Two-Gun Kid!

SON OF M #3: To reclaim his lost power, Quicksilver crosses the line!

SPIDER-GIRL #95: Spider-Girl and friends face off against Tony Stark's berserk bodyguard, with unexpected casualties.

SPIDER-WOMAN: ORIGIN #3: More of Jessica Drew's past comes to light as she begins her work for S.H.I.E.L.D.

THING #4: Ben Grimm gets a new sidekick--Lockjaw!

X-FACTOR #4: There's a riot in Mutant Town, and X-Factor is caught in the center!

X-MEN: THE END-MEN AND X-MEN #2: In the depths of space, an X-Man breathes their last!

YOUNG AVENGERS #10: The secret origin of Hulkling is revealed!

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